

## PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

# Simple Tips for the Prosthodontic Schedule

Kirk Behrendt, ACT Speaker & Coach

Life is way too short! So make the best of it. And how you manage yourself against time will greatly determine how good your life is. This month we tackle the monster that controls your professional life . . . YOUR SCHEDULE.

I firmly believe that each one of us is given a “gift” of our work. How we use our “gift” to better the lives of the people around us gives us the professional significance that we long for. When approaching this subject, it is important to make sure your practice is created on the *premise of service to others for the fulfillment of our lives* instead of *service to others at the expense of our lives*.

I see way too many prosthodontists that are out of equity with their BUSINESSES and THEIR LIVES.

While no prosthodontic practice is absolutely perfect, here are a few quick tips to think about when making your practice equitable with your life:

- Determine what you want your life to look like on a weekly and daily basis. And be firm about this! If you want to work from 8–5 Monday through Thursday, then do it! It’s just that simple. Make the things that are important to you a discipline in your schedule that rarely gets compromised (working out in the morning, breakfast with your children, dinner with your family, social time, sleep, etc.)
- Prosthodontists approach me all the time and say, “You don’t understand, my patients commute into the city, and it’s hard for them to get back here during those times, so I need weekend and flexible hours.” If this is your reality, then my answer is, “You haven’t given your patients a good enough reason to comply with your hours.” Create more value for your patients and this will become less of an issue for you.
- No one should ever have to work Saturdays or evenings. PERIOD! What you make in production during those times is costing you way too much in LIFE. If you need those hours to make your practice survive, then you have a practice built on convenience and not “value.” Evaluate those patients who can only come on Saturdays



and evenings. Ask yourself if these are people who really value your time when you give it to them. Do you really want to take precious time away from your family to be with these patients? Besides, what kind of patients do you think they are going to refer to you anyway?

- If you are working Saturdays or evenings . . . STOP! Mail a postcard to all of your patients with a picture of your entire team and their children (on the front) with these words on the back, “We just wanted to let you know that we will no longer have Saturday and weekend hours, so that we can spend more time with our families. We hope you understand.” Your patients will love it. If they don’t, then they are probably people you shouldn’t be seeing in the first place.
- **Examine the Rule of 32, which is: “If you can’t make more than enough money to support your lifestyle by working 32 clinical hours a week (or less), then something is DANGEROUSLY wrong with your practice or your lifestyle.”**
- **TRAIN YOUR PATIENTS TO VALUE YOUR PRACTICE AND YOUR TIME.** If your patients make the rules about when they can come in, it is not their fault . . . it is yours. Once you create a mutually beneficial relationship, based on trust, people will follow your lead. So lead them in a way that is beneficial to each of you.

- Dr. Frank Spear said it best, “Give me the **FIRST 5 HOURS**, with procedures I truly enjoy doing, on people I like being with . . . and then I’ll deal with all of the other stuff in the last **2 HOURS**. That is a perfect day for me.”
- Don’t give patients too many options. Create a structure and lead them into it. Make it simple: Basically, you have **GREEN TIME**, and you have **BLUE TIME**. Green Time is for your productive procedures you enjoy doing. Blue time is for your nonproductive procedures. Patients only get appointed to **GREEN TIME** or **BLUE TIME** . . . that is it! So, when you walk Mrs. Jones to the front desk, you say to Sue (your Appointment Coordinator), “Sue, can you give Mrs. Jones 10 units of green time for her next appointment?” Sue then says to Mrs. Jones, “The next time we have available for this procedure is next Wednesday at 9:00.” Your entire team should be very skilled in getting patients to see the value of **WHY** it is important for them to

come in at the time you have given them. Notice, Sue never **EVER** says the words, “When can you come in?” or “What day/time works best for you?”

These are some oversimplified tips, but you get the point. **YOUR PATIENTS HAVE TO FIT INTO YOUR SCHEDULE** . . . this is not about **YOU FITTING INTO THEIR SCHEDULE**.

You see, your schedule tells me about what is important to you. It also tells me about your attitude toward dentistry. Some of us are just setting ourselves up to be out of equity with our professions. Conflict like this seeks a resolution, and that resolution is escape. Others are enjoying their practices way too much and don’t want this great ride to ever come to an end. What is your outlook?

Don’t waste any more time.

Start making your schedule reflect the type of life you’ve always dreamed for yourself.

Copyright of Journal of Prosthodontics is the property of Blackwell Publishing Limited. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.